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ABSTRACT

This paper explores Puerto Rican high school students' experiences in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). Data were collected via individual and group interviews with Puerto Rican students, focusing on the relationships, or lack thereof, among participants and their teachers and counselors and the relevance and/or interest, or lack thereof, of curriculum structure and content. The first section examines the literature on Puerto Rican students' experience in U.S. schools, the historical context of Puerto Ricans in Chicago, and demographics of the CPS. The second section describes the theory and methods used to frame and analyze the data. The third section explores students' voices and notes scholarly research that helps to frame their experiences within a critique of teacher preparation and curriculum that disadvantages students of color. Overall, students in general education high schools had more negative encounters with teachers and curriculum than did students in magnet and college prep schools. Curriculum content and structure were perceived as problematic for students in general education and vocational schools. Students in all types of schools had concerns with the lack of counselors. Students recurrently resisted negative encounters with teachers and curriculum. Appended are: Interview Lengths; Interview Questions; List of Participants; and School Data. (Contains 25 references.) (SM)

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What about the Teachers and the Classes? Puerto Rican Students in Chicago Share their Experience

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American Education Research Association Annual Conference
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ED 478 620

"They are always looking at what is wrong with us. I don't get it. They [teachers] would be like, are you having problems at home or are you pressured by the gang bangers. Come on now, what about the teachers and the classes, shouldn't they be questioned for once (Interview; Raphael [1], 2001)."

This interview comment personifies the focus of this paper: The high school experiences of Puerto Ricans in Chicago regarding teachers and counselors as well their perception of the high school curricula they encountered. The purpose of this research is to explore Puerto Rican student experiences in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). Puerto Rican students were chosen for the interviews because as a junior scholar in Education, I have found a lack of research on Puerto Ricans in Chicago. Secondly, the social and political history between Puerto Rico and the United States (US) has fostered a complex milieu in the education of Puerto Ricans in the United States. A key aspect of the education of Puerto Ricans in the US is the perception of cultural deficits that has framed most of the education research of not only Puerto Ricans, but of students of color altogether. Kozol (1991) explains that education reports focus on low scores, high dropout rates and poor motivation and ignore issues of inequality and segregation. The interview comment above speaks to the awareness students have of the cultural deficit model and how this ideology continues to influence the school experiences of students of color. After interviewing ten former students and conducting a group interview, their experiences began to form my research questions. Although many issues were discussed during the interviews, two interrelated themes

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will be the focus of this paper. (1) The relationships, or lack thereof, among the participants and their teachers and counselors, and (2) The relevance and/or interest, or lack thereof, of curriculum structure and content. The experiences of the participants regarding teachers and curriculum will be explored to discuss teacher education using a critical education theoretical and methodological lens that focuses on the lived experiences of the participants. To better contextualize the voices of the participants, some key literature regarding the Puerto Rican experience in schools in the United States (US), the historical context of Puerto Ricans in Chicago as well as demographic information of CPS, will be explored in first section. This sociohistorical backdrop will be followed by a discussion of the theory and methods used to frame and analyze the data sources of this research project. The voices of the participants will be explored in section three coupled with scholarly research that helps to frame their experiences within a critique of teacher preparation and curriculum that disadvantages students of color. The final section of this paper, will discuss a future plan of study based on the findings which consists of a call for an examination of current teacher education reforms in Chicago and the extent to which they are rooted in ideologies of transformative education.

I. Sociohistorical Context

Context of Puerto Ricans in Chicago

Many Puerto Ricans on the continental US have held on to their culture as a means of identity (Rodriguez, 1991; Nieto, 1998; Wagenheim, Jimenez, 1996; Padilla, 1987). It has been a very rough struggle due to the methods of assimilation and deculturalization that US institutions have utilized on Puerto Ricans in the US. Some examples include the attempt to replace Spanish with English as the majority language, or instilling U.S. patriotic values instead

of Puerto Rican (Spring, 2001).

"Puerto Rican patriotism was unheard of, we always were told and also showed you know that America is it we had all the flags, the pledge and also those Uncle Sam posters there were also teachers who use to be in the Army and they would always tell us you know the guys that it was the thing to do. Besides that we also had the whole constitution test thing I mean they make sure everyone who goes to high school knows about American patriotism, they don't care if we know math and all that (Interview; Carlos, 2001)."

While considering the methods of deculturalization used by the United States towards Puerto Ricans, the issue of schooling is essential. Throughout the history of the US, many ethnic groups have been faced with similar issues of deculturalization including African Americans, Japanese Americans, Native Americans and Puerto Rican Americans to name a few. Schools were used as instruments to assimilate all the groups mentioned into lifestyles of the US. From 1900-1930 many policies were instilled into the Puerto Rican pubiic schools for the purpose of "Americanizing" the Puerto Ricans. Aida Negron De Montilla's book, *Americanization in Puerto Rico and the Public-School System 1900-1930*, provides a list of these policies. A few examples of such policies include:

1) Attempts to expel teachers and students who engaged in anti-United States activities.

2) Attempts to use teachers from the U.S. versus local teachers.

3) Replacing local textbooks and curricula with ones reflecting the way of life in the United States.

The policies listed above provide information on public schools in Puerto Rico. However, it is imperative to recognize the historical experiences of Puerto Ricans who were part of the public schools in Puerto Rico who then migrated to the US. Overall, it is critical to take into account the history of Puerto Ricans in the US to gain better understanding of the struggles

and experiences Puerto Ricans face in US schools today. "Puerto Ricans have a unique colonial history and a unique set of circumstances that bring them to the mainland" (Ambert & Figler in Ambert & Alvarez, 1992 p.34).

Furthermore, in *Puerto Rican Chicago,* Felix M. Padilla (1987) recounts the historical struggles of Puerto Ricans in Chicago and current issues that continue to face this community, such as gentrification. Padilla discusses many historical struggles that have remained in the thread of the Puerto Rican experience in Chicago today. In discussing gentrification, he includes the fact that the Puerto Ricans were aware of what was occurring and they tried to resist with grassroots movements. However, the gentrification of the Puerto Rican *barrios* are still occurring today. Carlos expresses his experience with the process of gentrification focusing on his Puerto Rican identity.

"Gentrification is very apparent and ongoing, as a Puerto Rican it hurts because those Puerto Rican neighborhoods symbolize the Puerto Rican contributions in Chicago but now you have all these yuppies and people that have no roots in Chicago and do not know the history of the area like me who has grown up in Chicago and seen the disappearance of this history (Carlos Interview, 2002)."

Padilla's example of the resistance against gentrification is important because the participants of my research describe their lived experience in this context, most of them mentioned their relocation or the relocation of close family. In addition to Padilla's insight on gentrification, his entire book provides a backdrop that helps to place the experience of Puerto Ricans in Chicago.

The history of Puerto Ricans in the CPS is only a fraction of the Puerto Rican experience in the US. However, it is essential to consider this portion of history within the context of the lived experiences of my participants. In the following scenario, the Puerto Rican community in Chicago exercised their voice to initiate change in the school structure. "One place where the

hopes for revitalization converged was Tuley High School, which had a predominately Puerto Rican enrollment. But with an administration and teaching corps comprised mostly of non-Puerto Ricans, there was a lack of communication and understanding between staff and students. Unhappy with the lack of attention and respect accorded to their children, parents and educators initiated a campaign for reform (Susler,1998, p.144)."

Although this community was aware of the nonrepresentative school structure and organized to combat this problem, their demands were rejected. "Politics and local neighborhood contexts are inseparable from schooling" (Ramos-Zayas, 1998). Therefore, schools need to acknowledge the politics between Puerto Rico and the US coupled with the contexts of neighborhoods to better serve the Puerto Rican students.

"I don't think the people who are making the rules for schools like what classes to take and all that really know what we need, you know it's not like they knock on my family's door and ask us or anything it's usually the same group of people making the decisions for us (Interview; Yesenia, 2002)."

Another important piece in the historical context of the schooling experience in the CPS system, is the struggle with school reform. "National attention was focused on Chicago [in June 1988] when former Secretary of Education, William Bennett, called the Chicago public school system the worst in the nation" (Vasquez, 1994 p. 13). This statement was only one of the many factors including teacher strikes and changes in the city politics that led to the reform of the Chicago schools. The participants in this research lived through this reform while attending Elementary school. The reform in the CPS impacted all students attending the CPS in one way or another. However, Puerto Rican students and other under served groups faced this chaotic reform with other factors such as racial prejudices. "Puerto Ricans who came to live in Chicago

were given a reception based on racial prejudices of the city's white population" (Padilla, 1987, p.59). These racial prejudices were also present within the CPS system.

You could go to a school with the majority [of students] being Hispanic, but you're working under a system that is a White system so it's going to be different because you still have the White teachers and the White system so you're not going to find that link when you go to school (Interview; Elizabeth, 2001).

This climate led to the absence of Puerto Rican school teachers, counselors and principals as well as lack of Puerto Rican curricula in the schools.

A Look at CPS

In the 1993-1994 school year the total enrollment of the entire CPS district was 409,499. The percentage of White, Black and Latino students in attendance was 11.4%, 56.1%, and 30% respectively. The percentage of low-income students in the district was 75%. This quantitative data helps to better understand what the CPS looked like when the participants attended high school (http://www.cps.k12.il.us). The data for September 2001 shows that the racial breakdown of the students today shows an even a higher percentage of African-American and Latino students in the CPS. Furthermore, the percentage of low-income students has increased as well. Unfortunately, the teacher racial breakdowns were not available for the years in which the participants were enrolled in the CPS, however, the 2001 data does include this information. In September 2001, 40.9% CPS teachers were African-American, 44.9% were White and 11.5% were Latino. The student percentages contrast the teacher racial breakdown, especially for Latinos. Latino students made up 35.8% of the CPS students in 2001, 51.3% were African-American and 9.5% were White. The percentage of all students from low-income families was 85.4% in 2001.

Are these percentage correlations of racial breakdowns and low-income a coincidence? I would argue, because of the voices of my participants and the historical context of Puerto Ricans in Chicago, that it is not a coincidence, but a result of a school system negating the needs of certain groups of students. The following section of this paper will help position the participants' experiences through a discussion of the theoretical perspectives used to interpret the interview data.

II. Theoretical Perspectives and Methodology

Theoretical Lens

The principle driving my research objectives can be categorized as critical inquiry; "An emancipatory principle drives such research, which is committed to engaging oppressed groups in collective, democratic theorizing about what is common and different in their experiences of oppression and privilege" (Denzin, 1998 p. 332). Working out of a critical education framework, Antonia Darder argues that teachers must be cognizant of the ways capitalism impacts the world, creating ideologies about the "other" that disadvantages children. "What exists in the United States is a political economy nourished and bolstered by an ideology of power relations and class structure that render members of disenfranchised groups virtually disposable and expendable (Darder, 2002 p.13)."

Darder explores the way this "ideology of disposability" gets played out in various aspects of urban life including, the inequitable time and attention victims of crimes get allotted based on the color of their skin or their class status. The ideology of disposability gets played out in the schools in various ways. Therefore, teachers must be aware of these power relations and how they drive things like high-stake testing, that continue to leave our children at a severe

disadvantage. For example, the participants in this research discussed feeling disposability in several ways, including within the process of being pushed out of high school.

"Well I went to see the counselor, this tall white guy. As soon as I walked in the door he had this attitude, so I had an attitude too. He basically told me I was sixteen and I don't go to my classes so he asked me what my plan was. I was nervous so I relied on my attitude to get through the meeting. I replied with a 'What do you think?' I remember how pissed I was. Then he let me know that I did not have to be in school. So it was that easy for them to let me go, two weeks into my second year of high school, my first year at that school, I was a drop-out (Yesenia's Interview, 2002)."

A critical education framework challenges teachers to break the hegemonic forces with educational practices that encourage ongoing questioning and the development of critical social thought rooted in social consciousness (Darder, 2002). Darder explores the dialects of revolutionary practice with a discussion on education as a political act, the history of knowledge production, and schooling within the political economy. First, consciously or not, teachers perpetuate values, beliefs, myths and meanings about the world. Therefore, progressive teachers engage students in a critical understanding of the world. Secondly, the production of knowledge has historically been in the hands of the privileged members of society, because of this, most teachers perceive history as a subject taught from a book that happened in the past. Some of the schooling experiences shared by the participants spoke to the perception their teachers held in teaching history.

"I remember that in history class there was always like this list of things to memorize, the names of the presidents, war dates, you know like countries and capitals all that stuff (Elizabeth Interview, 2001)."

Instead, critical educators undertake the process of uncovering the recorded and unrecorded histories that have been marginalized and excluded. Furthermore, teachers need to be aware of the power of the classroom decisions that they make such as; (1) what will be taught, (2) how

texts will be discussed, (3) what materials will be used, (4) what type and quantity of homework will be assigned, (5) and how student interactions are structured (Darder, 2002). Depending on the theoretical insight and practice of the teachers, their teaching content and deliver will fit accordingly. Traditional practices perpetuate a functional and instrumental view of knowledge, while revolutionary practices begin with the view that all human beings participate actively in producing meaning. Teachers who practice critical pedagogy have similar agendas rooted in their emancipatory framework which includes concerns for the standardized curriculum that does not represent the experiences of students and results in bored, uninterested and thus disruptive students. In inner city high schools that serve large proportions of low-income and non-white students these bored, uninterested and disruptive students are misunderstood and teachers and school officials interpret their behavior as a consequence of the individual student's deficiencies. Darder argues that there are several influences that continue to foster these deficit theories in the school context; US foreign policy, evasion of class analysis in the US, and how these ideologies are deeply anchored in our minds, including teachers.

Methods & Data Collection

Qualitative research methods were used to gather data as well as in the process of data analyses. Life history interviews with former Puerto Rican students of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) were conducted over the period of one year. My research group consists of ten former Puerto Rican high school students who attended Chicago Public Schools between 1990-2000. The participation included an individual interview and a focus group interview with four of the ten participants. I used several methods to contact participants, including sending e-mail messages to student organizations with large numbers of Puerto Rican students, making phone

calls and sending letters to past and present colleagues who are Puerto Rican and attended high school in CPS. Several participants suggested other people they knew that I may be interested in interviewing. Member checks were done during the focus group interview, and for the other participants, via e-mail, phone and one-on-one meetings. The individual interviews varied in time, some lasted twenty minutes, while others lasted two hours, the individual interviewed averaged 72 minutes in length.[2] The same questions were used to guide the interviews, however, some participants had more to share than others. The group interview lasted about two hours and thirty minutes. The interview transcriptions coupled with the feedback from the participants were used to draw similar themes that the participants discussed. In addition, the experiences voiced by the participants were used to exemplify the sociohistorical experiences of Puerto Ricans in Chicago.

Participants

The ten participants had various experiences in the CPS. While the majority (8 of 10) attended the four years of high school in one CPS, a couple attended more than one high school and did not attend high school for four years. Five of the ten participants attended the same high school at one time or another during their high school experience.[3] Although none of the ten participants attended high school in Puerto Rico, three participants were born in Puerto Rico and attended some Elementary school in Puerto Rico. Seven of the ten participants were women, and three were men. The participants were between nineteen and twenty eight years old at the time of the interviews. Furthermore, many of the participants' parents had similar histories with emigrating from Puerto Rico, with all participants having at least one parent who emigrated from Puerto Rico and moved to Chicago between 1940-1975.

Participants	Schools Attended	High School Completion
Carlos	Riverside	4yrs/ Diploma
Marisol	Riverside	4yrs/Diploma
Yesenia	Riverside & Vocational Tech	1yr and 1month/GED
Elizabeth	Riverside	4yrs/ Diploma
Stephanie	Riverside	4yrs/Diploma
Miguel	Kennedy & Alternative High	2yrs/GED
Alejandro	Martinez High	4yrs/Diploma
Rodrigo	City College Prep	4yrs/Diploma
Arlene	Academic High	4yrs/Diploma
Lillian	Math & Science Academy	4yrs/Diploma

III. Puerto Rican Voices Yearning to be Heard

What about the Teachers?

"Those people [substitute teachers] didn't explain anything to us, they would write real big on the board 'Be Quiet' and that was it. Mostly what people [students] would do is just either walk out or ask for a pass to go to the bathroom, and never come back (Interview; Carlos, 2001)."

- The negative experiences with teachers were continually expressed by many participants exceeding positive experiences. However, positive teachers were a primary focus in many of the experiences of the participants with all describing how at least one teacher influenced them. However, in *School Kids/Street Kids*, Nilda Flores-Gonzalez (2002), presents the voices of Puerto Rican students in a predominately Puerto Rican high school in Chicago. Their lived experiences spoke to social identity, and the role schools have in this process. There are many

elements that consist of the "school." Therefore, the role of schools in shaping identities of students is one that consist of various school structures such as the teachers, counselors, other students, administration, curriculum, and extra-curricular activities. Flores-Gonzalez's work speaks to the role these structures have in shaping identities; one of the focuses of this paper is the lack of caring and understanding of students' experiences in these structures, and how this creates barriers for students.

"Not having people like me for teachers and role models probably did not help because...that probably did not prepare me because those adult role models I had in high school - they were white, I don't think they understood me; and they saw me in a different light, they didn't help me. So I think it did make a lot of difference. Then when I went to college, I think I had more diverse professors (Interview; Elizabeth, 2001)."

Flores-Gonzalez explains that school structures need to change to help facilitate the development of identity for Latino students. I am advocating for that change to begin with a new conception of teaching that is rooted in the theoretical insight discussed by Darder as well as other ground breaking work that supports the transformation of teaching.

Caring Teachers Wanted: In all Schools

"In the sense of teachers, I could divide them into three different classes. There were some that just went to class and didn't care if you were there or not, they would see you in the hall and know you were in school but if you didn't go to class it didn't matter, they were just there to teach, they didn't care. Then there was a certain group of teachers that wanted to teach and also reached out to me and certain situations, there were very few, maybe two that I could remember in my whole high school. These teachers would reach out and try and talk to me and try and understand why I wasn't in class, and they communicated one on one with me. My third group of teachers, wanted me in their class but they would be mean about it, if they see you in the halls and not in class, they would rather give you a detention than talk to you about it. Through punishment or giving you an F on an assignment, that is the way they dealt with us, but they would let you know they were doing it. My way of responding to teachers depended on this. I was happy to get the teachers who just taught and didn't care if I was there, the first group, because in high school you want that. But I really liked the teachers that reached out to me, because I felt like I learned something from them both, I could only speak about two. The third

group of teachers, those were the teachers I rebelled against. I was like fine if you're going to be mean to me I am going to swear at you, threatened you, or key your car or something. The only reason why I rebelled like that, is because it worked for me, because the school will just put you in another class (Group Interview; Carlos, 2002)."

Carlos' experience was similar to those of the other participants who attended general education high schools, while those who attended magnet, college preps, vocational and alternative schools spoke more of positive rather than negative teacher relationships. These specialty schools are usually smaller in size, although this was not always in the case with the participants. The way the teachers expressed care varied according to the type of school. Arlene, who attended a magnet/college prep school with 2, 215 students (making it the fifth most populated high school), described her teachers very positively and stated one reason for these positive relationships with teachers was the smallness of the school. She interpreted the caring teachers as a result of a small school without being aware of the difference in the aims of teachers and schools depending on the type of school and the agenda of the school.

"I thought all the teachers at Academic High were pretty good. The ones that stick out in my mind were like younger, I guess you could say, because they kind of relate to students better. I've had a good relationship with most of my teachers. One sticks out just because I had her for 2 years, so she was like...like I had her my sophomore year and then I had her senior year—no, I had her freshman year and senior year. So then since she already knew me as a freshman, she just kind of followed-up with me throughout senior year; she was really, really cool. Other teachers, yeah, I just had...but some students didn't have relationships with their teachers, and some students did. But I pretty much got along with my teachers. It wasn't such a big school so when I seen them around I would be like, 'Hey (Interview; Arlene, 2002).'"

Furthermore, Rodrigo, who attended a college prep school with the largest student enrollment (4, 071) in the city described his teachers similar to Arlene but does not describe these relationships as a result of school size.

"I can recall that a majority of my teachers were always well prepared for class and never

allowed us [students] to sway away from our assigned tasks. Overall, the teachers truly cared about their students and you could sense that through their teaching styles and techniques (Interview; Rodrigo 2002).

While Arlene and Rodrigo described their teachers as collectively positive and people who cared, Stephanie who attended a general education high school with half the number of students describes only having two teachers that cared, similar to Carlos' experience voiced above. Angela Valenzuela's insight on the experiences of the general education students helps to understand why these students tended to have more negative encounters in school. "Regular-track youths are prepared for remote a Anglo, middle-class social world that many or most in their group will never experience in any meaningful way (Valenzuela, 1999 p. 264)."

" I had one teacher who cared - actually, she was a student teacher - and she was like, we were like really good friends, and she was like always give me information on schools and, you know, wanting - she went to Paul College at the time, so she was like, you know, giving me information on Paul and some other schools, and she was like, you know, really pushing me to go to school (Interview; Stephanie, 2001)."

Nieto's (1999) insight on the class distinctions within school quality speaks to the differences among the student experiences in general education and vocational education programs versus those students who attended magnet and college prep programs. She discusses the relationship among the purpose and function of schools and the way students will be approached within the school context. Race and class work together to construct the identities of these school types with the magnet and college preps constructed for the middle class White students, while general and vocational schools serving students of color who more likely than not members of the lower social classes. The Consortium on Chicago School Research and the Mexican Legal American Legal Defense and Educational Fund led by Elaine Allensworth and

Todd Rosenkranz conducted a report titled *Access to Magnet Schools in Chicago* and their findings consisted of the following; (1) There is an over-representation of White and Asian students in magnet schools (17.7% and 6.9, respectively); (2) Latino neighborhoods and very low-income African-American areas on the south side have access to the fewest magnet schools in Chicago; (3) There are no magnet schools in areas that are predominately Latino; and (4) Families living in the wealthiest sections of the city have access to more magnet schools than other families (Allensworth & Rosenkranz, 2000). Carlos speaks about going to high school in the city as an experience about race and class identity entrenched in the fabric of our society. Schools subtract resources from youth in two ways: (1) dismissing students' definitions of education (2) resuming cultural deficit models that focus on assimilationist policies and practices that minimize their culture and language (Valenzuela, 1999). Furthermore, Darder (1991) argues that the scholarly community has given little attention to examining the developmental challenges faced by members of low-status groups who have to participate in multiple, often conflicting, and contradictory social systems and contexts. Four response patterns related directly to the biculturalism of members of subordinate cultures that are not explored in teacher preparation;(1) alienation, (2) dualism, (3) separatism and (4) negotiation (Darder, 1991, p.678)."

"There were different things that played a role growing up in the city of Chicago and going to a city high school. Also knowing other students that were in other Chicago Public Schools that were basically the same as my school, so there was no chance of ever knowing my school was really bad to where I could have been able to complain. It's like all the colored kids and poor kids are going through it so if that's all I talk to, how would I know? There were drive-by shootings at my school, and there were drive-by shootings at other schools in the city. So not knowing about all the schools that these things didn't happen at. Like nothing was explained to me about why my teachers are not here. Those things came with the territory of attending a school in the city (Interview; Carlos, 2001)."

The lack of awareness regarding these response patterns in teacher preparation manifests a

division of schooling amongst those students who are using these response patterns and those that are privileged members of society and do not experience these response techniques. Another participant describes one of her experiences with negotiation that speaks to the response patterns described by Darder. Fortunately, in this scenario negotiation resulted in something positive, but many of times when students respond with negotiation tactics they are quickly silenced.

"Once my counselor didn't get back to me, and I was so worried about not going to college that I even wrote her a memo myself, back then in high school, and she showed up to my Division room to talk to me, because she was scared. She never thought I would write her a memo about I did this and that and you never got back to me. She was just there getting paid to do nothing (Group Interview; Elizabeth, 2002)."

In *Puerto Rican/Latino Student Voices* Torres-Guzman and Martinez Thorne in Nieto (2000) discuss what makes a good teacher according to their student voices. Students described many similarities to the participants in this study. Discussing communication, caring, effective teaching and encouragement. Which were all used to describe positive teacher experiences. "Good teaching emerged as important to the schooling of Esperanza students and was identified as effective pedagogy, knowledge of course content, and encouragement of students (Torres-Guzman and Martinez Thorne, 2000)." When teachers become aware of the politics of education (Darder, 2002) and concepts like dysconscious racism (King, 1991) the opportunity to foster positive teacher relationships materializes within the school context. King's research with teacher candidates speaks to the way the dominant ideology, which privileges whites, is ingrained in teachers as well as others so teachers need to actively deconstruct these ideologies and build understanding of their students.

What about the Classes?

Research on the relevance of curriculum to the political economy has been explored for decades,[4] providing a backdrop to the experiences the participants encountered with curriculum content and structure. Historically schools have served as social-control devices (Dryfoos 1995; Kozol, 1985; Darder, 2002). One of the most considerable vehicles used to transfer the social control is the dominant curriculum delivered across schools in the US. Furthermore, Schaps, Lewis & Watson (1995) argue that schools need a heightened sense of community and need to change aspects that go against ability grouping, adult-imposed rules and consequences and motivation by competition, the four broad areas of change they describe are (1) climate, (2) structure, (3) curricular content, and (4) pedagogy. While the aspect of pedagogy is described throughout the discussion of teaching and the aspect of curriculum will be discussed in this section, the climate and structure are present in both the teaching and curriculum encounters. For participants attending general education schools, the curriculum was primarily described as a time consuming, keeping busy, non-relevant phenomena. The participants who attended the college prep and magnet schools described it more as challenging. Middle class and suburban students more likely will be offered challenging and progressive curriculum preparing them with various post secondary and career options (Wong, 1994).

"Through the strong academic foundation that I built in high school, I was able to attain an internship position immediately after high school and several scholarship awards. In retrospect, high school (although challenging) did a great job of preparing me for college and my career in corporate finance (Interview; Rodrigo, 2002)."

While Rodrigo feels that High school prepared him academically, Elizabeth's experience in an honors program at a general education school was quite different.

"I wish in high school I could have been prepared for college, I was an honors student and when I got to college I was not ready they made me take these extra classes even though I had 5yrs of Math, because I went to summer school I still was not ready for the regular Math class for college freshmen, I really do not get that (Group Interview, Elizabeth, 2002)."

Darder's (2002) discussion of the ideology of disposability, described above speaks to the treatment Elizabeth encountered in a school that perceived the students as disposable stemming from the 51.5% drop out rate coupled with the average ACT score hovering at a 15.8.[5] The structure of the curriculum plays a key role in constructing inequity among students in US schools. Lillian describes a similar experience of disposability with her high school preparation.

"When I got into college, I was like dam if I would have had someone to kind of focus me more...I would have taken anatomy in high school. Because that's what I wanted to do was something like in the medical field. So instead of just taking classes to take 'em, like I would have taken classes that would have helped me out in college (Interview, Lillian, 2001)."

The participants also expressed concerns regarding the content of the curriculum they encountered, including the lack of Puerto Rican history. Darder gives a vision for teaching that not only includes other histories but using this practice to involve students in learning how they fit into the histories discussed. "Teachers committed to a revolutionary practice must often search for and bring in alternative materials, articles, and textbooks to juxtapose with those required by their districts. Conflicting representations of history provide students an excellent opportunity to consider why such conflicts would exist and how different readings are tied to issues of power, privilege, and entitlement (Darder, 2002, p.109)." From the experiences of the participants, it is clear that their curriculum encounters did not include a vision of revolutionary practice.

"If you get a glimpse of Puerto Rican history you are really lucky because that kind of thing does not get talked about, I really do not get it because there were so many Hispanics and Puerto Ricans at my school but nothing about Mexicans or us except for the "Dia de Los Muertos"

celebration and we really never learned about what it was we just did art and brought food (Interview; Stephanie, 2001)."

Lillian, who attended a magnet school, had a similar experience, she did not see the Latino culture portrayed to her likings within the school context. Although Lillian attended a magnet school her experiences were described similar to those participants who attended a general education school. However, the school she attended had the highest dropout rate (19.3- Math Science Academy; City College Prep-14.4; and Academic High -6.9) and the lowest ACT average (20- Math Science Academy; City College Prep-20.9; and Academic High -22.5) among the three magnet or college prep school represented in this study. In addition, it also has a higher percentage of low-income students, with 50.6% coming from families with low-income.[6]

"I remember like September...you know which is Latin American month, I remember doing special project for the Day of the Dead and all that kind of stuff. But it was like, it was always around food, you know. Like I remember they had like churros, and chocolate which is really more Mexican but it just kinda got all...it got all tangled together (Interview; Lillian, 2001)."

IV. Research Implications

Findings

Students in general education high schools have more negative encounters in school both with teachers and curriculum, this stems from the structure of schools being sites of social control that does little for the true advancement of students of color as well as students from low-income households. While some magnet and college prep schools may offer more nurturing experiences and more challenging curricula, the majority of the participants as well as the majority of students in inner city schools do not have the privilege to attend such schools, which is clear in the report discussed above by Allensworth & Rosenkranz (2000). Instead, the majority attend general education schools that have been described by the participants as a conflicting site

holding them down academically. Students in all types of high schools have concerns with the lack of counselors. The role of counselor needs to be upheld and validated as an integral part of the high school structure. However, as it stands it is not a key component in the experiences of these participants. Furthermore, certain participants described this lack of counselor attention as a racial phenomena, especially the two males who attended general education schools.

"I remember the counselors were a joke, nobody knew about them, maybe the White kids, but us no way, they were not there for us, they were there for the few kids that would survive, and those were usually the White kids. Now that I think about it, the Hispanic students had more problems they should have been helping us, but you know how it works (Interview; Alejandro, 2002)."

Curriculum content and structure are perceived as problematic for students in general education and vocational schools. The participants described the type of curriculum that was delivered in these schools as non relevant, boring, lacking in accountability and not very challenging. A significant finding was the reoccurrence of students resisting negative encounters with teachers and or curriculum, although participants used distinct resistance approaches, they were used often. Students resist negative teacher experiences in several ways including avoiding class, negotiating the system and dropping out of school. Nieto examines the different ways Puerto Rican students may use resistance in school. There are numerous examples of students' resistance, and they range from innocuous to dangerous: inattention in class, failure to do homework, negative attitudes toward schoolwork, poor relationships with teachers, misbehavior, vandalism, and violence are all illustrations of students' resistance (Nieto, 2000).

For change to occur within the student and teacher interactions, CPS needs to work with teacher education programs to assist in preparing teachers for transformative pedagogy to foster the success of all students. Teachers need to implement dialogical [7] pedagogy to understand the

contributions the students bring to the learning process. Curriculum content and structure needs to be revisited and transformed to include the experiences of students. Students will continue to resist negative experiences, that sometimes leads to being pushed out of school, unless teachers and schools begin to listen and understand them as "integral human beings (Darder, 2002)."

Future Plan of Study

The idea of transforming teacher preparation is immense. Therefore, in order to begin to understand how to transform schools for all students to contribute and learn we can begin with a focus on teacher education reforms of programs who feed teachers to CPS. In addition to teacher preparation programs, exploring the practices of current teachers in CPS is essential because all these teachers may not have the opportunity of being in a learning environment where their teaching is explored. Hearing from teachers is an important step in framing this discussion. Interviewing teachers with both a traditional pedagogy and transformative pedagogy in the CPS will be helpful in understanding different standpoints and how these get played out in the context of schools. The discussion of the curriculum delivered in schools is another critical part of this research through an analyses of culture relevance in high school curriculum being utilized in CPS we can begin to transform these contents.

There is a group of people that have first hand experience on how the Chicago schools helped them succeed or led them to failure, the students. Of all the players within the school system, students are silenced the most. The interview data sheds light on the silencing of students in the CPS and how their lived experiences can begin to deconstruct the myths of cultural deficiency that saturate the culture of schooling in the US.

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NOTES

1. Names of participants and schools are pseudonyms.

2. Data Collection: Interviews- Participants & Length of Individual Interview

Carlos 120 M

Marisol 60 M

Yesenia 120 M

Elizabeth 105 M

Stephanie 60 M

Miguel 30 M

Alejandro 60 M

Rodrigo 20 M

Arlene 60 M

Lillian 90 M

3. This research began with a focus of one high school, which is titled Riverside in this research. Therefore, my first interviews were with former students form this school. As the research continued to develop I interviewed students from different schools but those from Riverside are in the majority in this research.

4. As early as 1980, Jean Anyon explored the hidden curriculum delivered in schools according to the social class of the students. See Anyon (1980).

5. The average Act composite for the district in 1993-1994 was 15.9. See Chicago Public School Data Book School Year 1993-94. Chicago Panel in School Policy

6. The percentage of low-income families for the 1993-94 school year in the entire CPS district was 69.3%. See Chicago Public School Data Book School Year 1993-94. Chicago Panel in School Policy

7. See Darder (2002) for more on dialogical pedagogy.

APPENDIX A : INTERVIEW LENGTHS

Data Collection: Interviews

Participants	Length of Interview	Focus Group
Carlos	120 M	X
Marisol	60 M	
Yesenia	120 M	
Elizabeth	105 M	X
Stephanie	60 M	X
Miguel	30 M	
Alejandro	60 M	
Rodrigo	20 M	
Arlene	60 M	
Lillian	90 M	X

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Biographical Information

1. Birth, birthplace
2. Birthplace: mother, father
3. Family of origin: cultural life and special remembrances (favorite books, TV programs, church/religious experience)
4. Favorite social events as a child/adolescent

Educational Experience

5. Elementary /High School(s); public or private, In U.S (state) or another country?
6. Did you choose to attend the high school you went to? If so why?
7. Do you recall which courses you were enrolled in, curriculum content?
8. Did you have a counselor; how often did you see him/her?
9. What can you tell me about your high school teachers?
10. Did your counselor or teachers discuss decisions to be made after high school?
11. Do you remember who your role models were in high school?
12. Do you recall being a member of any social clubs?
13. Were there clubs established that focused on culture/ethnicity?
14. How often did you think about your race/ethnicity when you were in high school?
15. Do you recall any racial tensions at school?
16. Do you feel that high school prepared you for life after high school? Why or Why not?

APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANTS

Participants

Participants	Age	School(s)
Carlos	24	Riverside
Marisol	27	Riverside
Yesenia	23	Riverside & Vocational Tech
Elizabeth	25	Riverside
Stephanie	26	Riverside
Miguel	24	Kennedy & Alternative High
Alejandro	20	Martinez High
Rodrigo	20	City College Prep
Arlene	19	Academic High
Lillian	26	Math & Science Academy

APPENDIX D: SCHOOL DATA

Data for 1993-1994: CPS Attended by Participants

School	Type	Racial Makeup	Drop out Rate	Avg ACT
Riverside	Gen Ed	63%-L 17.9%-AA 14.7%-W	51.5%	15.8
Vocational Tech	Vocational	31.6%-L 30%-AA 28%-W	22.3%	17.3
Kennedy	Gen Ed	46%-L 14.4%-AA 26.3%-W	44.6%	15.9
Alternative High	Alternative	N/A	N/A	N/A
Martinez High	Gen Ed	84.4%-L 11.5%-AA 1.6%-W	61.7%	14.2
City College Prep	College Prep	31.3%-L 18.8%-AA 32.2%-W	14.4%	20.9
Math & Science Academy	Magnet/College Prep	22.2%-L 29%-AA 26.9%-W	19.3%	20
Academic High	Magnet/College Prep	12.5%-L 53.5%-AA 15.9%-W	6.9%	22.5
CPS		**27.5%-L 57%-AA 11.4%-W**	**44.9%**	**15.9**

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